Work bee dragging a log from the forest where it was cut to the Rumbima house tamberan. The log was later hollowed into a slit gong which Yat contributed to the community. The workers are those of Yat's relatives who answered his call for help. In return he will provide them with a feast.
See Chapter VII, pages 198–199.

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Chapter II
Record of Events
Kwoma--Diary

October 12, 1936.

114 Yesterday was Sunday according to our figurings; it is the second Sunday
[123] since we arrived here. The Waskuk* with a finish/as their spokesman, declared timer
that no work was to be done since it was Sunday. They were probably
testing us out to see whether we were "missin" or not, for yesterday con-
struction went on as usual on our house boy's houses. The houses were
nearly completed, except for a few finishing touches. They also constructed
an outhouse for us.

342 Hamb's house is almost square, constructed in the same manner as ours
with frame and maratta roof. There are no porches on the gable end, but
instead, a low verandah or gallery formed by setting the side wall back
about three feet from the edge of the floor and under the eves on the
south side. The walls consist of stiff thick reeds bound together like
a weir of fence, and held together by two sets of strips bound to each other
352 with rattan wound spirally between each reed. Hamb is now making a bed. The
uprights of the house form three of its posts and fourth is stuck through
the floor in the middle of the room. He had bound cross pieces between these
posts and is now nailing slats across parallel to the shorter side. Over
this he intends to put a mattress of the same stiff reeds at right angles
to the slats. Hamb is very proud of his house and considers it quite
superior to anything that the Waskuk could construct.

342 Wisep's house is peculiar in that the roof was taken from an old
[483] tumbled down Waskuk house and was carried up bodily by about thirty-five
of the Waskuks and set in place--a no small feat since the only mechanical
device was two or three forked sticks which they used to extend their
reach when the top edge of the roof was lifted onto the ridgepole. Also
they set up a scaffolding of a pole lashed between the uprights.

[101] * Waskuk is the name by which the Kwoma were known by the Australian administration.

3½ bark at the foot of the mountain months before the final ceremony. Sago fronds are next cut and made up into 3' square shingles (ndup), which are stacked in piles around the clearing. The task of cutting and carrying [483] the materials is no small one. Many men are needed to lift and set the center posts in place. Some men push with forked sticks, others hold the pole in the hole dug to receive it, and another crew pulls on lines (wankd) fastened high up on the pole. The new house tamberan replaces an older and smaller one which stands stripped of its maretta inside the new one. The staging will stand until the ornamentation of the ends of beams has been finished.

7½ "The day for the ceremony of dedication draws closer. It is finally 3½ set for the next day. The uninitiated boys sing and dance in anticipation, [202] for they will be allowed to go. The night before the maretta is to be fastened for good, gongs sound, giving official word to what everyone [533] seems to know already. In the morning the young men will fix the maretta [192] to the refrain of a hogwasawit (A leader sings a sentence and the workers answer with a long drawn out and falling owi.)

"As I approach, the young men are discovered perched like birds on the ridge pole. The hogwasawit reaches the coda. After singing three lines all together, the work is, for the time being, finished. I am told that this is a distinctly different singsing from the one we witnessed at the harvest [462] of the yams. Women are not present as the fastening is going on, but it [614] isn't taboo to them--merely men's work. All the sibs of Waskuk and Bongus are represented and seem to mix indiscriminately. The Waskuk lulwai, Marak is seated with a group of men in a little temporary house tamberan which houses the gongs. They tell me he is "cross" with the young Waskuk for joining the singsing so he starts one of his own with gongs in opposition.

578 Kumb and Kar came up in the evening. Their argument may be over as there is no outward sign of hostility.

578 231 February 11, 1937. The day before yesterday Tip came back. I heard Wof talking. It seemed Marok and Chinawe had gone to wash sago, and on the way back their dogs had fought; Wof's dog had been pretty well chewed up. Wof had been cross and wanted to know why Marok had not separated them. Awambaka had gone to Marok and told them that Wof was very cross. At this Marok's wife came and told Wof that they were not near the dogs, and Wof said that he wasn't cross but was making up stories. Then he chided Awambaka for talking. He told her that if she did this under other circumstances, it might cause a fight.

754 Last evening at dusk the gongs tolled, and at first they said that an old woman had been sick and that this announced her death. We heard excited shouting, and it turned out that a man had been seen sneaking behind someone's house, obviously looking for sunga (sorcery materials). They had grabbed spears and chased him, and he had run down into the "sac sac" (sago swamp). They neither caught him nor recognized him. Had they caught him, they would have speared him.

476 534 [574] In preparation for making a slit gong, Yat obtained food and announced a ceremonial work feast. He called the workers in the morning. First they went down toward the market place to cut a liana about an inch in diameter and twenty feet long. One of the men, in monkey fashion, climbed [481] up a tree and cut the top with a big knife. This was carried into the [313] garden by the side of the road toward Wonysbunkura. A log was cut to the [284] desired length and shaped. A collar had been left on the pointed end of [483] the log and in back of this the liana was tied--a single turn and half knot around the stocky part--and slipped down tight. The end of the liana was

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534 first beaten to make it pliable. The helpers then tied on the tow line
[483] and jerked it along the path with cries of "oya hip!" pulling on the "hip". The workers often hissed as they worked. Several sticks were cut and used as bars to pry the log over roots, etc. If it were running on the side hill, stakes would be stuck up to keep it from rolling down sideways. Yat, Twisambi, and War did the most work. The job took about three hours from
[242] when it was finished; the workers were paid with boiled sago and roast
[465] pig which Yat's wife had prepared.

342 February 14, 1937. Yesterday afternoon Marok set up the centre post for
335 an extension of his house. He used the same method to move the post as
[483] with a garamut (gong) except that when level ground was reached, the post was carried on the workers' shoulders. Yat, Kar, Mar, Mas, and Guiyap helped. Kar was slightly annoyed at the lack of manpower in the sib.

The post was for an extension in his new house. The hole for it had been partly dug already, having been carefully put in line with the ridge-pole by extending a bamboo and sticking another upright against it.
[804] The butt of the pole was shaved down a bit so that its diameter did not vary for the distance it was to be underground, and its diameter was measured by wrapping a bamboo splint around it and breaking it at the point of overlap. The hole was widened with this as measure to allow ample space for the pole. Meanwhile Kar was making the kwats mbonka (the joint between post and ridge-pole). To do this the required length of the post was determined by marking on a bamboo the distance between the bottom of the hole and the extension pole. This was marked off on the post, and it was nicked to mark it. It was then cut with an axe-shaped wedge. The faces of the wedge were then concaved with an adze to make a cradle for the ridge pole. This is to keep the wind from blowing it off.